

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present election, Applicant will have elected with traverse the invention defined as Species A comprising at least claims 1-17, 20, 21, 24-27, 49-55, 58-76, 97-107, 110-119, 121-131, 133-137 and 140-143.

In the election requirement, the Examiner set forth a requirement to restrict the claimed invention to one of eleven groups of distinct species. Although the Examiner identified the correct legal standard for evaluating a restriction/election requirement of the instant application, Applicant submits that the Examiner has applied the standard incorrectly.

The Examiner asserted that the application contains patentably distinct species as follows:

Species A, shown in Figs. 1, 2 and 5;

Species B, shown in Fig. 4;

Species C, shown in Fig. 6;

Species D, shown in Fig. 7;

Species E, shown in Fig. 8;

Species F, shown in Fig. 9;

Species G, shown in Fig. 10;

Species H, shown in Fig. 11;

Species I, shown in Fig. 12;

Species J, shown in Fig. 13; and

Species K, shown in Fig. 14.

The Examiner incorrectly indicated that no claims were generic.

Applicant respectfully traverses this basis for election. Applicant submits that all of the claims relate to a common subject matter. Applicant submits that the recitations of each of the independent claims, as well as the various dependent claims are so closely related for examination purposes as to make the restriction requirement entirely inappropriate under any proper basis. For this reason alone, it is submitted that restriction is inappropriate and that all the claims in the present application should be examined together.

Furthermore, it is believed that the features shown in each of Species A-K are not materially different, so as to constitute distinct inventions, for examination purposes. As the Examiner must acknowledge, they all relate to an arrangement at least one stiffening element attached to a panel. Therefore, the searches must be at least somewhat overlapping for the groups. Thus, no undue burden is placed on the Examiner when examining all of the claims together. Consequently, it is believed that all the claims, i.e., claims 1-143 relate to a single inventive concept which share many generic features.

For all these reasons, and consistent with the office policy as set forth in M.P.E.P. §§ 803, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider the position taken in the above-mentioned Official Action and withdraw the election requirement in the present application. Accordingly, the Examiner's restriction requirement is believed to be entirely improper and inconsistent with current USPTO guidelines, and has been traversed for the

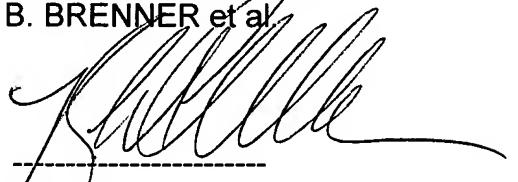
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reasons set forth above.

Nevertheless, in order to be fully responsive, Applicant has elected with traverse the invention defined by the Examiner as Species A, of which at least claims 1-17, 20, 21, 24-27, 49-55, 58-76, 97-107, 110-119, 121-131, 133-137 and 140-143 are readable thereon.

Authorization is hereby given to charge any fees necessary for consideration of this paper to deposit account 19-0089.

Respectfully submitted,
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